



Hanze
Marian van Os
Centre for Entrepreneurship
University of Applied Sciences

Next Education

Next Governance

Next Business

**Towards 21st century resilience and innovation capacity
in Groningen city and region**

share your talent.
move the world.

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Shaping the future of the triple helix

Train today's students for tomorrow's jobs and let today's professionals develop themselves alongside the progress in their field - these are the two most urgent demands we need and want to meet in vocational education. However, the world is changing so rapidly that the focus of Universities of Applied Sciences (UAS) only on the design of initial education is no longer enough. Education must connect with industry, governments, NGOs and population in a more intensive and permanent manner.

In the Northern Netherlands, in particular in the city of Groningen, higher and secondary vocational education are aware of this urgency. Therefore, knowledge institutions have innovatively developed formal partnerships with industry, governments, population and social organisations in their field. What stands out most is the cooperative model in which education institutions, local governments, citizens and entrepreneurs steadily collaborate within a single organisation, a new type of company. This is a business model where education and research cooperate with hundreds of companies, civil society organisations and social organisations in the city and the region.

Each level has its own form: a Regional Cooperative for the region and a Community Cooperative for the neighbourhood. In this brochure we would like to introduce you to these forms of collaboration.

Preface

The Groningen Approach

The city of Groningen breathes education. There are 65.000 students in the city of Groningen. With an urban population of 200.000 inhabitants, this enormous amount makes Groningen one of the youngest cities in Europe.

It is also why Groningen depicts itself as the City of Talent. With so many young people the city is bustling, which is internationally recognized and attracts even more students from all over the world.

Therefore, education and research are important components of urban policy. What makes Groningen so special is our intensive cooperation with all levels of education, from childcare to university and everything in between.

Groningen city is a pioneer in models for close cooperation between education institutions, civil society and public authorities. For instance, in the nineties, Groningen city has

been a front runner in developing the so-called Community Schools. In Groningen we call them literally 'window school', as they stand wide open for cooperation with the parents, residents and organisations in the neighbourhood – all aimed at supporting the best possible awareness and development of the pupils. As a councilor, I consider it my responsibility to create a climate which is supportive to mutual cooperation. I firmly belief this will result in innovative education models to the benefit of our children and in the end to the benefit of our society.

In our Groningen Education Pact, we have agreed upon the objectives and agreements of this cooperation. All



Ton Schroor
Elderman of Education and
Executive Councillor South
Groningen and deputy mayor
of the city of Groningen

parties come together regularly. We jointly meet for the ‘quality debate’, set up a shared agenda and connect the link between pre-school education, through primary, secondary and higher education. Together we build the future, with the Groningen approach as a lasting model of innovation.

Establishing a new relationship between education and society

Innovation in education is important. Our society is rapidly changing, which equally rapidly changes the skills young people need for a prosperous and fulfilling life. In order to support this innovation, I promote mutual cooperation between partners in the fields of education and civil society. I am convinced this will result in better education and in young people who are better equipped for the future labor market and society.

In Groningen we are familiar with many projects aimed at educational innovation. In this publication, I would like to introduce you to a remarkable project. Our society is changing rapidly. This provides opportunities to bridge the divide

between education, citizens and business and to explore new forms of sustainable cooperation.

Therefore, as municipal council, we welcome the approach of professor Willem Foorthuis’ Sustainable Cooperative Entrepreneurship research group and its partners at Terra VET. I have gladly been a part of this exciting experiment for area-oriented work in the region by bringing together citizens and students in the so-called Entrepreneurs’ Innovation Lab as the platform for the establishment of a Community Cooperative. After an admittedly challenging start, these very different parties have hit their stride.

The approach of the Regional Cooperative paved the way towards triple and quadruple helix cooperation. It better prepares young people for tomorrow’s jobs and it offers our city’s residents the possibility for lifelong learning. And last but not least, the local cooperation projects contribute to improve the quality of life in the neighborhoods.

Towards a solid regional anchoring

We are now able to work together in the social environment, to make plans together and to eventually realize them together. This calls for renewal and innovation of the cooperation between these parties. Of course, we all know that the culture and organisation of education institutions is completely different from the daily dynamics of citizens and entrepreneurs. How do you connect these two cultures? The municipality encourages many projects and assignments offered by residents and entrepreneurs and where lecturers and students work together with the clients. This was not always easy. In close consultation with each other and by adapting our methods, we have evolved. Now, we are cooperating with entrepreneurs and citizens in the construction of cooperatives that do justice to the interests of all parties in the district and the region.

This collaboration is made up by long-term and formalized alliances, such as a Community Cooperative and a Regional Cooperative. Since then, sub-cooperatives have been developed, such as a cooperative shop

in the Wijert community, where students of vocational education and training institutions and Hanze UAS cooperate with neighbourhood residents and formerly unemployed citizens on a new business model with a major impact on the welfare of the neighbourhood. The municipality has formulated and signed a formal

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and multiannual covenant with all actors concerned, in which we jointly declare to be responsible for projects, processes, manpower and resources. This provides many more opportunities for the school to operate in the neighbourhood and the region.

Towards an innovative cooperation and innovation model

It is our joint ambition to let this cooperation flourish into a model for realising the community agenda in a sustainable manner. Residents and entrepreneurs will be able to influence both their future and that of their community or company. In addition, the students have a powerful and inspiring learning environment. They will be even better equipped for their careers once they leave the classroom. And the lecturers? They gain a powerful didactic tool, the support of community expertise and supplementary financial possibilities from neighbourhood budgets, business and government funds. This is a testimony to our ambition to stay ahead when it comes to innovation and renewal in education.

*Ton Schroor
Elderman of Education and Executive
Councillor South Groningen and deputy mayor
of the city of Groningen*

Next Education

Hanze University of Applied Sciences, in cooperation with Terra Vocational Education and Training (hereafter: Hanze UAS, Terra VET) is qualifying in better responding to changes in the labour market. Businesses, local governments and citizens contact us with their knowledge questions, which is why we need to adapt our profile, our culture and attitude.

We will not sit back and wait for interested parties to find us. Instead, we have built a steady cooperation structure, the Entrepreneurs' Innovation Lab, where we meet each day as education and business partners. In this dynamic partnership we see an important role earmarked for governments as facilitators of this process. This development is not incidental. Our Sustainable Cooperative Entrepreneurship research group has worked on this for years. Together with the triple and even quadruple helix partners, we have developed a model to address the issues of regional and neighbourhood agendas cross-sectorally and in cooperation with all levels of education, in educational regional networks that range from vocational

to academic institutions. Our motto is “out of the school - into the field”. We want to learn and work together, everywhere in the region where innovation takes place.

Entrepreneurs' Innovation Lab

With the design of the Sustainable Cooperative Entrepreneurship research group we give shape to the permanent connection with Hanze UAS, its education and research and the regional industry. We do this in our Entrepreneurs' Innovation Labs, enabling Hanze UAS to deploy hundreds of students per semester on real life projects. This is how we design a leap in scale. From incidental projects to multi-annual programmes and permanent cooperation based on new and



Jacqueline Gomashie,
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and Economic Management;
Hanze UAS

formalised regional connections and creative combinations. Entrepreneurs and citizens are given access to the latest knowledge in education. And vice versa: students and lecturers experience innovation from the field. Governments fulfil a special role by supporting the partners in education, industry and research. Naturally, a functioning local and regional

The main goal is to bring together the knowledge, talents and strengths of students, lecturers, entrepreneurs and residents.

economy is a prerequisite for this. Time after time, the Entrepreneurs' Innovation Lab serves as the connecting element, the platform where we meet while working.

Learning and innovating community in the city of Groningen

By means of this brochure we are happy to introduce to you our region, our city, our University of Applied Sciences and its knowledge partners, the Regional Cooperative and the Community Cooperative, the Sustainable Cooperative Entrepreneurship research group and the method of cooperation of the Entrepreneurs' Innovation Lab. In concrete terms, we wish to highlight a unique example of cooperation in the city of Groningen.

Municipal executive councillor Ton Schroor has created a remarkable experiment for area-oriented working: the establishment of the Community Cooperative. The initiative was taken by the research group and Terra Vocational Education and Training (VET), an agriculture and horticulture training center in the city of Groningen. In close cooperation with civil servants and citizens, the research group has combined forces with district residents, entrepreneurs and the housing corporation.

Together they wanted to give new impetus to the two city districts. The municipality has aided the further development of this collaboration, for this initiative matches exactly with the municipal policy for area-oriented working. This is why the Community Cooperative was formally ratified by all parties in a binding covenant very recently.

The main goal is to bring together the knowledge, talents and strengths of students, lecturers, entrepreneurs and residents. By multiannual programming, the school is truly coming into the neighbourhood. Residents and entrepreneurs from the neighbourhood learn together with the students, only not in schools and classrooms, but in the middle of their neighbourhood and focused precisely on the subjects that matter to them. I am proud of this result.

*Jacqueline Gomashie,
dean School for Financial and Economic
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Reader's guide

This brochure addresses a new regional approach to tackle the threats of demographic change, innovation gaps and youth unemployment. In a cooperative effort, Hanze UAS as well as Terra VET, public bodies and regional entrepreneurs are partners within the so-called Entrepreneurs' Innovation Lab (EIL). Intended to reinforce SMEs' resilience, it is an eco-system for cooperation and co-learning, either to establish new businesses collectively or to join existing SMEs in the region.

Given the serious nature and magnitude of regional backlog particularly in rural areas, Hanze UAS, Terra VET, City of Groningen and their key partners in the Northern Netherlands have joined forces for an exciting new approach. Under the umbrella of a Regional Cooperative (a cooperative business of about 600 SMEs), diverse support organizations and regional public bodies, they are cooperating on a regular basis in the regional EIL.

It is not one central building somewhere on the campus, but a fine meshed network of regional innovation hubs, where students,

lecturers, and entrepreneurs meet on a regular basis. The traditional classrooms are turned inside out for shared learning in practice and on the job, resulting in the sharing and gaining of not only knowledge and expertise, but also responsibilities and budgets.

From the very beginning of their bachelor and master career, young people acquaint themselves with regional entrepreneurs, their work and working methods. Vice versa and possibly even more important: future employers can work together with the higher education institutions to tailor

young peoples' skills to fit the regional labour market's innovation demands.

In the **first section** you will find a short introduction on the nature and origin of the transition in education, civil society and economy. Schools are required to be flexible and responsive to the needs of labour market and the society in the short and middle long term. They will have to build firm private public partnerships and align their ambitions with the regional and local agendas. Faced with crises, demographic change and brain drain, many European regions are rethinking their innovation capacities. They have to develop employability instead of employment and continuous development in a life-long-learning way.

The **second section** takes a look at new regional entrepreneurship. In addition to the tried and tested cooperatives, we can observe the rise of a completely new cooperative model: the Regional Cooperative and its local counterpart: the Community Cooperative. These are social enterprises with members from the local and regional business community, education and research,

government, public organisations and citizens' associations. They contribute towards achieving public objectives – such as regional development, prosperity, welfare and the sharing of knowledge – and at the same time convert this to new revenue models.

In the **third section**, you can read about the cooperative Entrepreneurs' Innovation Lab (EIL). The approach and the underlying method are described in detail as well as the key functions and responsibilities within this learning and innovative community.

Finally, in the **fourth section**, you will find a selection of practical examples in the city of Groningen and the region of the northern Netherlands.

List of abbreviations

There is quite a variety of abbreviations used in this brochure.

For easier reading, we have listed them here:

VET:	Vocational Education and Training
UAS:	University of Applied Sciences
SME:	Small and Medium-sized Enterprises
EIL:	Entrepreneurs' Innovation Lab (in Dutch referred to as "Innovatiewerkplaats Krachtig MKB")
SCE:	Sustainable Cooperative Entrepreneurship
FEM:	(Institute for) Financial Economic Management
COIL:	Community of Innovative Learners



Changing views on education, society and economy

Prepare students for specific skills and professions and participation in society – this has been the role of secondary and higher vocational education and training in the Netherlands. Admittedly, the economic competitiveness of a region traditionally depended – and still depends – on the skills of its workforce. In turn, the skills and competencies of entrepreneurs and their employees depend on the quality of education and training institutions. However, for the future labour market this twofold approach is no longer sufficient.

1.1 Innovation at VET and UAS

Economic, environmental and social changes in the European Union bring about new challenges and opportunities for vocational education. In order to take an active role in the innovation chain, VET and UAS have to commit to public-private-partnerships reflecting the three new aims of 21st century education and research:

1. Increase the number of students graduating from VET and UAS and improve the education quality (initial education);
2. Enhance the innovation capacity of the companies and (semi)public organisations involved (regional innovation);

3. Improve the skills, mobility and flexibility of the current employees at the organisations involved (Life Long Learning).

What does that mean for today's education institutes?

It requires schools to be flexible and responsive to the needs of labour market and the society in the short and medium long term. They will have to build a firm triple helix partnership and align their ambitions with the regional and local agendas. In order to build successful regional partnerships, educational institutions will have to reposition themselves – internally with regards to their

curricula, programmes, portfolios, timetables, organisation etc, as well as externally with regards to their network building, learning arrangements, agenda setting and regional programme building.

Participating in regional networks requires flexible curricula in which students are able to earn study credits for their work outside the school, in a multidisciplinary context. This implies that learning outcomes, learning activities and schedules allow for flexibility in time, location and learning content. Moreover, facilitation of learning processes and assessment of learning results by lecturers in a multidisciplinary, real-life context is fundamentally different from teaching regular courses at school and requires a different mindset and skills. For instance, lecturers become learners themselves and are actively involved in regional networking, agenda setting and programme building. Therefore, the school organisation, culture, curriculum, and staff should reflect an innovation-oriented and entrepreneurial attitude in order to prepare students to function

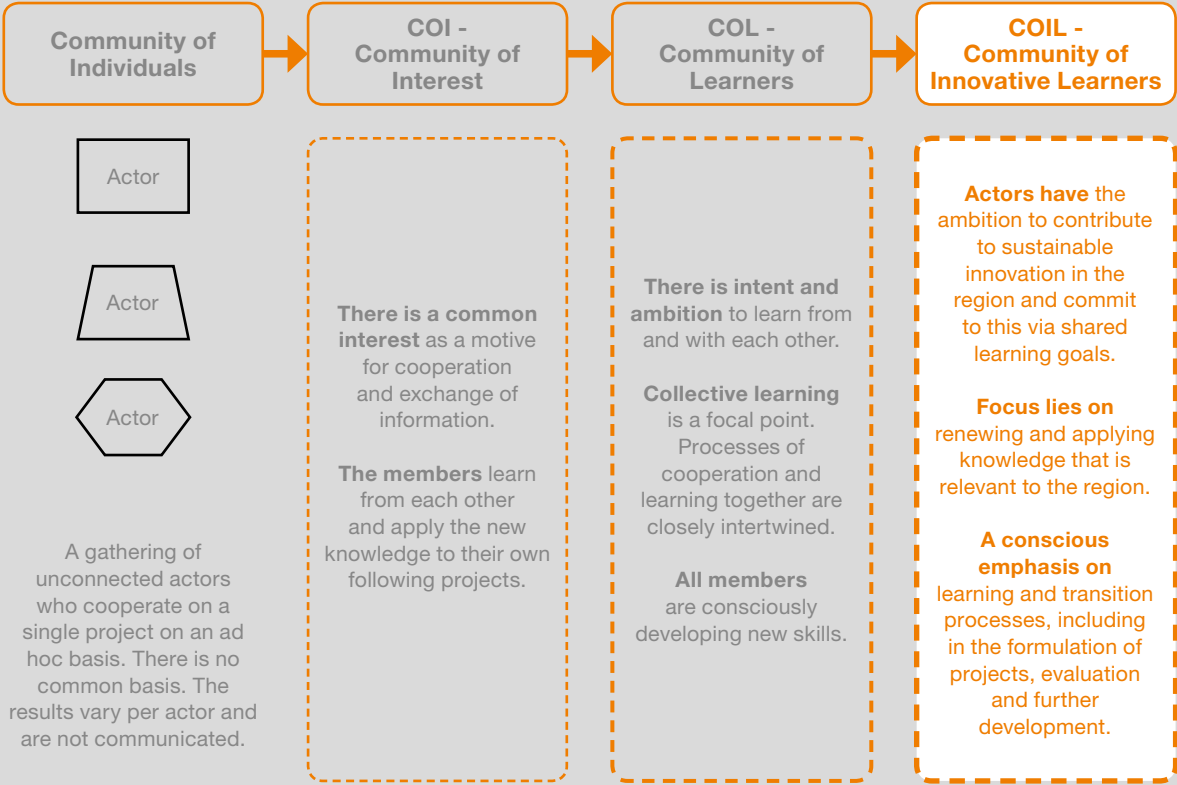
successfully in challenging and complex contexts and ultimately for working life.

Transition to regional partnerships

The challenge for educational institutions is to share education and create knowledge on a permanent basis with their partners in the region. The emphasis here is on ‘permanent’. It makes no sense to cooperate in one project or to build a centre of expertise just for meetings every now and then. What we need is a threefold transition process starting from a community of individuals:

- 1. to a Community of Interest (COI), cooperating in one single project on an ad hoc basis,
- 2. to a Community of Learners (COL) with a commitment to collectively working and learning
- 3. to a Community of Innovative Learners (COIL) who jointly create knowledge and innovation on a steady basis.

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What is needed for the transition to regional partnerships is a threefold process starting from a community of individuals

This is not an easy process to realise. In the Entrepreneurs Innovation Lab (EIL) we developed an approach which we would like to share with you in this booklet. For further descriptions, please refer to section 3. ‘Innovation Approach at Hanze UAS’.

1.2 Changes in society and market

Entrepreneurship and employability

Education institutions cannot simply be changed, and they are not the only ones with a need for change. Market and society in European regions and abroad are faced with crises, demographic change and brain drain. Many well educated young people have to leave the region after receiving their college degree, although a great part of them would rather stay in their home (and often peripheral) regions. There simply are not enough challenging jobs for them.

Entrepreneurship and employability are key: new flexible thinking, developing innovative ideas, seizing opportunities and grabbing them. There is a need for closer triple-helix cooperation; for meetings, for joint learning, designing and utilizing their ideas and creating strong and feasible start-ups. They need long-term coaching networks and flexible and crossover curricula, where industries and organisations meet and new industries can be easily accounted for in the curriculum.

Societies have to develop employability instead of employment. The new economy is about continuous development in a life-long-learning way. Entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial skills are essential in a more dynamic economy, where self-employment and niche-companies grow by number and quality.

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Need for crossing over

Other key elements are crossovers and international upscaling. Crossovers to stimulate new ways of cooperation, so that new ideas and innovations can flourish. Upscaling to learn internationally from best practice and critical success factors towards successful entrepreneurship and transfer them – tailor made- to the countries and regions involved, in order to create new knowledge and business opportunities.

Crossovers can be dealt with in different ways, for instance cross-industrial between industries (e.g. food, water management, leisure and tourism, nature & forestry, health etc), cross-organisational between types of organisations (triple-helix: education, government & society, market) or cross-border: between countries. Many governors and entrepreneurs are focussing on one or maybe two of the previous elements. However, all these types of crossovers are essential elements of successful innovations. By bringing them together, the modern skills of entrepreneurship and optimal combinations in different types of crossovers can be explored, taught and stimulated. International upscaling fits extremely well in the EU agenda and offers great economic opportunities.

Principles for cooperation

For their triple helix cooperation, they need to realize five principles:

1. Work together as a learning community: each participant (student, lecturer, researcher, industry partner, citizen, etc.) experiences that they are part of a community. Each participant learns at their own level.
2. Utilize and appreciate the diversity of the work team, take advantage of existing knowledge and use it as a step towards gaining new knowledge.
3. Integrate learning and working: team members learn by performing authentic tasks supported by education interventions tailored to the learning individual. This is explicitly supported by the organisations.
4. Facilitate mutual feedback and reflection on tasks, processes, results and experiences, as a person, as a team and as an organisation.
5. Ensure adequate embedding in participating organizations and share the knowledge in the partners’ places of work.

New prosperity for cooperatives

The cooperative is a business model that meets the changes defined here. This form of business has never been completely gone, but the number of new registrations across Europe has been growing explosively in recent years. Traditionally, the agriculture and horticulture industry, as well as the financial sector favoured the cooperative model, in which entrepreneurs worked together closely with

education and research partners on a regional and local level. However, the recent increase stems from sectors such as energy and healthcare, the medical sector and local quality of life.

The cooperative is also popular with independent contractors. All in all, we are talking about a new business model that is motivated differently than regular companies. This new social movement is of great importance to an institution like Hanze UAS, where almost 50% of the student population is economically oriented.

It is for this reason that the Sustainable Cooperative Entrepreneurship research group focuses on cooperative entrepreneurship. Supporting, strengthening, further shaping and visualizing this movement is of great importance to the initiators involved, and for the quality of research and education. From the very beginning, the history of the cooperative reflected the objective to bring about practical merit for its members, rooted in a socially inspired ideology. This is still exactly the case with today's cooperatives. They strive for the realisation of both social and economic goals. After the investment period, members generally expect to see returns. The initial idea may stem from a romantic ideal about a new economic and social structure, but without a clear revenue model this is a dead end. A combination of common and self-interest.

Perhaps you are starting to wonder what a short treatise on the cooperative has to do with a publication that is supposedly about the innovation of education? Hopefully this will become clear in the next chapter, where we discuss how the innovations of this traditional business model lead to a modern entrepreneurial form that leaves room for education.



Regional and Community Cooperatives Next generation cooperative models

2.1 A completely new cooperative model

This section specifies the innovation and adaption demanded by new challenges to a traditional business model. As stated before, a cooperative is a company founded by members who benefit personally from properly running the company. Rooted in a socially inspired ideology, cooperatives from the very start sought to achieve a practical purpose. This remains just as true for today's cooperatives, which seek to achieve social as well as economic goals.

Both common as well as self-interest are also the drive behind the sectoral cooperatives that have been popping up all over the place during the past few years. The sectors and goals can vary widely, ranging from the construction of a fibre-optic network to the joint purchasing of sustainable energy, large-scale energy generation on the part of private individuals, the communal purchasing of healthcare, running a care home or a supermarket in the village, running a community centre or developing new uses for vacant

social real estate. Economic and ideological goals coexist and reinforce each other here.

All the examples listed above fit the definitions of the cooperative model that we have known about since the first cooperatives were established 250 years ago. Does this mean there's nothing new under the sun, then? Well, not exactly – because in addition to these tried and tested cooperatives, we are seeing the rise of a completely new cooperative model as well.



A cooperative for the benefit of the region

To illustrate this, we take a look at the Northern Netherlands, a relatively sparsely populated part of the country. Located in the Western part of the province of Groningen, you can find the Westerkwartier area. The economy in this area is to a

significant extent reliant on SMEs and self-employed professionals, many of whom work separately from one another. If they were to organise themselves on the scale of the greater Groningen area, by combining their expertise and strength as small-scale entrepreneurs, jointly they could handle considerably

larger assignments than each of them could hope to take on individually.

In late 2013, it was for this reason that a group of pioneers in the Northern Netherlands, together with civil-society organisations, land managers and knowledge institutions, decided to establish

a new organisation. They opted for a tried-and-tested model, but on an hitherto unprecedented scale: the Regional Cooperative, which they saw as a new cross-sectoral cooperative company at a regional level. In other words, this cooperative would not focus on one specific goal within one specific sector like a traditional

cooperative, but would have a range of stakeholders, each with their own core goals, coming together to use their shared values and ambitions as the guiding principles for social, economic and landscape development that would benefit the area and the people working and living there.

These pioneers were the National Forest Service in the Netherlands ('Staatsbosbeheer'), three agricultural nature organisations, Terra VET, the Groningen Countryside Association ('Landschapsbeheer Groningen') and the De Zijlen Care Organisation. Their shared capital consists of nearly 20,000 acres of land, 40,000 students, 2,000 lecturers and experts, 72,000 cows, a whole arsenal of equipment and tools as well as energy, brainpower and the courage to innovate.

Differences with traditional cooperatives

What distinguishes the Regional Cooperative from a traditional cooperative? First of all, its

members do not come from one single sector. Additionally, they do not have one clearly defined objective. The Regional Cooperative as a social enterprise with members from the local business community, education and research, government, public organisations and citizens' associations, represents the relevant local stakeholders and together they pursue social and economic well-being and efficacy for the region.

This has provided an important basis for a major education renewal as advocated in the foregoing. Bring education on a day to day basis and on a high-level scale in permanent cooperation with entrepreneurs and civil society organizations and then formalize it. This creates long-term and thus multiannual collaboration, which allows for the programming and organization of cooperation.



2.2 Regional added value thanks to new chains as a revenue model

The Regional Cooperative Westerkwartier grew organically out of an alliance in the Westerkwartier – an area within the province of Groningen – that had evolved over many years. The founding members aimed at resolving the long-standing tension that had existed between nature conservationists and agricultural entrepreneurs. Therefore the new cooperative's geographical area of focus was already clear when the cooperative was first established. When the cooperative got its own research group for practical research – titled Sustainable Cooperative Entrepreneurship – it became apparent that this geographical area alone was too small to achieve real result. The research conducted by the research group led to a focus on the combination and mutual reinforcement of social and economic goals at a larger, regional scale. This pertained to four areas of focus that formed the building blocks for the Regional Cooperative's way of functioning: the revenue model, membership, cooperative entrepreneurship within the regional chain and the scale of the working area.

How can the various stakeholders that make up the Westerkwartier Regional Cooperative manage to achieve profits together? This is where the new regional chains come in – business models that, by definition, can only be built and maintained on a cooperative basis.

A four pillar working programme at the basis of the revenue model

In consultation with the research group, the Regional Cooperative structured its working programme around central topics: agri-food, energy, water & bio-based economy, living environment, health & social welfare and young people & start-ups. Cutting across these topics, research into ways of innovating the cooperative business model itself was added to this.

Everyone agreed on the importance of these topics for the regional agenda, both within and outside the Regional Cooperative. But how do you convert these topics into revenue models? For a traditional cooperative with a single goal, the revenue model is clear. You offer a clearly defined product or service, with members being able to make use of it or enjoy certain benefits. But that does not apply to area development. After all, non-members benefit from this just as much as members do. So why become a member at all?



Hence, a Regional Cooperative is hybrid in character, much more so than a regular cooperative. It functions as a civil-society organisation and as a business. It contributes towards achieving public objectives – such as regional development, prosperity, welfare and the sharing of knowledge – and must convert this into a business case. Like sector-specific cooperatives, it receives its basic funding from its own members. However, as stated above, there is little incentive for individuals to become members. This is why the membership of a Regional Cooperative is (not exclusively, but mainly) made up of representatives from regional bodies – business associations, healthcare organisations, knowledge institutions, interest groups, government agencies, semi-public bodies, etc. They achieve a proportion of their core tasks via the Regional Cooperative, develop new programmes together and each contribute a portion of their capacity (budget, staff or assets) to the Regional Cooperative.

By doing this, their joined efforts contribute to the development of socially responsible, sustainable community enterprise that is rooted in the region. What this amounts to is the development of both financial and social returns on the basis of new business, funding and governance models. The three partners – the government, the education sector and the business community – call this ‘next governance’, ‘next professionals’ and ‘next education’. For governments, this means they have to take up a new role as active brainstorming partners, facilitators

and co-handlers. They make innovation possible by clearing the way for innovation programmes and funding. Education and research institutes play an active role in job creation in the region by responding to demand from the region in a flexible, entrepreneurial way. Furthermore, entrepreneurs learn to look beyond their own businesses and profits, and to refocus their revenue models on achieving a combination of personal and communal interests.

Sustainable regional profit making

This all still sounds fairly abstract. How can the various stakeholders that make up the Westerkwartier Regional Cooperative manage to achieve profits together? This is where the new regional chains come in – business models that, by definition, can only be built and maintained on a cooperative basis. These cooperative chains play a part in each of the topics covered in the Regional Cooperative’s working programme – from food supply chains to healthcare and energy chains, and so on. A concept like the circular economy even cannot exist without chains and closed loops. This requires that all the parties involved develop smart new specialisations. You can only be of use to each other in a Regional Cooperative if, as a group, you have a broad spectrum of knowledge, competencies and capacities at your disposal and if you know how to use them.

2.3 Draft definition of a Regional Cooperative

A Regional Cooperative is an organisation made up of members from the regional business community, the education & research sector, government agencies and/or civil-society organisations. These members represent the relevant regional stakeholders and work together to achieve social and economic returns for the region.

The Regional Cooperative initiates programmes and large-scale projects aimed at establishing a new regional chain economy. In doing so, it forms an umbrella for smaller sectoral cooperatives that can undertake sub-projects within the chain. The Regional Cooperative is responsible for the overall cohesion of the region and provides an infrastructure for acquiring, managing and sharing knowledge, facilities and budgets. As the Regional Cooperative represents all the relevant parties, it is able to drive the regional and local innovation process, functioning as an agent of change for the region.

2.4 Regional Cooperative Collaboration

What started out in a limited area only two years later has already outgrown its modest origins. The Regional Cooperative drew the attention of other areas in the province and beyond. The administrators in the informal Groningen-Assen Region partnership were inspired by the example, and are currently looking into the possibilities for establishing their own Regional Cooperative, with support from the research group. The challenge lies in building an umbrella

made up of hybrid organisations. The mother organisation mediates between the market, the government and society, and ensures that sustainable economic, social, environmental and climate goals are achieved and developed further. All the organisations within this network form an organically cross-connected system for the creation of value that can be expressed in integrated accounting and reporting.

The search is directed towards identifying a system or a structure that allows an overarching and facilitating ‘mother cooperative’ and its associated independent cooperatives to function optimally. This system can contribute to maintaining and improving the urban and rural areas within the region, mainly thanks to the chain approach that has been developed. The interconnectedness and synergy between Groningen and Assen and their surrounding rural areas, is further reinforced by the cooperative chains. Moreover, this approach also satisfies the demand for the embedding of new governance demands, such as decentralisation, the redefinition of roles and responsibilities, self-organisation and the establishment of networks. In addition, new revenue models are increasingly sought in the strengthening of chains, new partnerships and open innovation. There is a growing awareness that economic value is not only about figures on a balance sheet, but is inextricably linked with social and ecological values. The Regional Cooperative seems to be a business and government model that can encompass these developments and also help take them to the next level.



A new approach to local empowerment

As a first step, a preliminary inventory was conducted through interviews with neighbourhood residents and entrepreneurs. Analysis of the results brought up a number of issues: large numbers of elderly residents, immigrants and single-parent families, issues on unemployment, income and

debt, health issues etc. Based on these general areas an agenda and an entrepreneurial working programme was developed and with the input of the community, the municipality and education institutions, transferred to be realised in the EIL.

The Community Cooperative is ratified by a cooperation covenant between the municipality of Groningen and Terra VET, and other educational institutions and partners endorse the agreement.

2.5 The Community Cooperative

Cooperating at local level

The model described for the regional level has a local counterpart. In the city of Groningen the local model was realised as the Community Cooperative Helpman/De Wijert, referring to two urban neighbourhoods. This particular cooperative is a partnership between the municipality of Groningen, Terra VET Groningen, Hanze UAS and other educational institutions and local residents, entrepreneurs and institutions from the community.

The Community Cooperative has its own EIL, (please, refer for details about this concept to section 3. 'Innovation Approach at Hanze UAS') where students, entrepreneurs and residents cooperate in programmes in order to make the community a better place. The starting point for initiating projects is a shared agenda. This agenda is structured along programme themes concerning social participation, a (green) living environment, poverty, sports, social cohesion and an improved economic perspective.

The central question as to community cooperation is threefold. How can residents organise the maintenance, management and the social and economic development of their community? How can they realise this in cooperation with knowledge institutions and a participating government? And how can they make this profitable? In partnership with local entrepreneurs, enterprising social organisations, governments, students, lecturers and

researchers, residents learn how to 'manage' the community together and gain income.

A particular role here is taken by one specific 'resident'. This is Terra VET, a secondary vocational education and training institution with a focus on agriculture, horticulture, landscape development, gardening and environment. Lecturers and students wanted to contribute to the community's development, mutually learning from each other. Supported by the community partners and the local governor, they created a cooperation benefiting all parties involved.

Another important item is the role local government is taking in this process. Indeed, they have established a decent cooperation. However, the local administration still acts like a funding facilitator. There is no formalized position as cofounder, co-producer or even member of the community cooperative. In their role of a cooperative member they would be faced with legal issues, such as public procurements and distortion of competition, which any authority feels uncomfortable with. Members of the community cooperative simply ask whether local authority does or does not join the cooperative. In reality, it's not simply a black-and-white issue, with no grades between them. There is a huge grey zone of legal uncertainty, which requires more pilots and experiments allowing for in-depth analysis and results.



Innovation Approach at Hanze UAS

In this section we want to discuss the concept and method of Hanze Entrepreneurs Innovation Lab (EIL) in greater detail. During the past two years Hanze UAS, and its Institute of Financial Economic Management (FEM) in particular, have strengthened their cooperation with the Regional Cooperative.

This cooperation was further defined by establishing a joint research group: Sustainable Cooperative Entrepreneurship (SCE). Researchers, lecturers, students and regional partners together shaped their own cooperative ecosystem: the EIL, where all partners can intensify their mutual knowledge creation – in real life working practice and experience. This allows partners to prepare and execute interesting projects for practical research. These projects always combine two aims: answering questions from local and regional entrepreneurs and generating added value for the region.

Projects always combine two aims: answering questions from local and regional entrepreneurs and generating added value for the region.

3.1 Learning and innovating communities

In the EIL, educational institutions are working together with regional stakeholders. At the centre of each project is the intention to learn and innovate. Therefore, partners are referred to as a COIL: a ‘community of innovative learners’. This benefits all partners:

- It offers an authentic, rich and challenging learning environment to learning and cooperating communities of students, lecturers and professionals;
- Schools and universities do not constantly have to be looking for businesses and public organisations that may have a question that would fit the curriculum;



- SMEs, public administrations and organisations in society do not have to shop around at several schools and universities, looking for that one expert that might just be able to answer their question – perhaps no sooner than the next academic year;
- For all three helix partners it means they do not have to jump from one project to another, time and again starting from scratch. Instead, they can work together with all stakeholders from a shared multiannual agenda and executive programmes, of course with some required flexibility. This way, they can really add value to the region.

Between 2014 and 2016 a total of 800 participants have attended more than 40 seminars. In order to answer all topics and questions from the region, the intensive cooperation in the EIL between Hanze UAS and the partners in the regions is being expanded from FEM to other economics schools and the research groups involved in Hanze UAS Centre for Entrepreneurship.

3.2 Cooperative knowledge partners

As such, Hanze UAS repositions itself entirely within the region: a responsive and even anticipating knowledge partner committed to structurally and permanently bringing knowledge from the school to the region and, conversely, utilising knowledge from

the region to update its curriculum. Soon, you will no longer be in a classroom, enrolled in a programme or institute where you learn a particular subject. And likewise, you will no longer need to go to a course taught in a classroom for further education on a particular subject area. Instead, you learn and work with students, lecturers and professors, regional private stakeholders (entrepreneurs and citizens) and representatives of (semi) public institutions on a series of issues that are relevant to the sustainable development of the region and the people living and working there. Together, you create a learning and innovating community. This connects knowledge institutions with the regional innovation goals. One of these components is ‘Powerful SME’: strengthening entrepreneurship and innovation capacity, and better valorisation and circulation of knowledge.

The research group’s knowledge team conducts this metamorphosis. Its research is focused on the constant renewal of the innovation capacity within the triple helix. It involves knowledge creation and circulation between companies, companies and knowledge institutions, and between knowledge institutions, including horizontal themes such as human capital, digitalisation, internationalisation and 21st century skills.

This takes time and effort as it is a profound change for all parties involved. It differs fundamentally from project-oriented education and project-oriented work as we know it. We also need to step back from incidental projects, in order to create a steady learning environment for all members of the community. No more bouncing from one project to another. Instead, applying a smart approach in which we consciously evaluate and apply knowledge from one project to the next. Due to the fact that there are permanent participants in the EIL (professors, lecturers, entrepreneurs, citizens, civil servants, etc.), it is possible to safeguard the connection between various projects and to provide a continuous learning and development line.

3.3 From local to regional

We started out small with the EIL. The cooperation with the Regional Cooperative, SMEs, local and regional authorities and social institutions proved successful and yielded its benefits. On the one hand, for the entrepreneur who became familiar with Hanze UAS, Terra VET and their knowledge partners and who can now easily contact those experts and students able to help. On the other hand, for the knowledge institutions that can link their knowledge and expertise, their education and research to common practice in the workplace.

Over the past year it became clear the implementation of this approach could be broadened from FEM to other schools to contribute their effort, knowledge and experience to the structure of the EIL. Entrepreneurs' Innovation Lab. Within Hanze UAS, we are already working together closely with institutions and faculties of Business Administration, Facility Management, Marketing Management, Law, Communication, Media & IT, Social Studies and the Academy of Architecture, linked to Terra VET, Wageningen University & Research and the University of Groningen.

In addition, it became apparent that the cooperation between the Regional Cooperative Westerkwartier and Hanze UAS captured the attention from various regions at home and abroad. In those regions, questions arose on how to broaden and transfer this new approach to cooperation. A process has been launched to investigate the implementation of the Regional Cooperative approach within the current Groningen-Assen region. The underlying idea is that this model increases the added value within the region and increases the chance of developing sustainable innovative revenue models. Moreover, we wish to cooperate with the Northern Netherlands provinces Alliance SNN to build an intricate network structure based on the concept of the Entrepreneurs' Innovation Lab. Through European funds such as ERASMUS and INTERREG, but also through the SNN, regions from Germany, Belgium and Sweden

have joined and regions in Romania and Albania have reached out.

The EIL's key principles

Together with colleagues from the Marian van Os Centre for Entrepreneurship, we have extensively set out the principles of the Entrepreneurs' Innovation Lab. This is an overview of the most important principles:

- Internal design: prepare your organisation for working in and together with the region;
- External design: help the partner organisations to do the same;
- Regional design: work together to form an innovative learning and working community, a Community of Innovative Learners (COIL) with shared objectives, values and goals;
- Do not give in to job agency mentality. The EIL is not a project factory where entrepreneurs can shop around for cheap labour to do time consuming work. As an entrepreneur, you are not a client who hands over their question or assignment to the school and comes back at the end to see if the job has been done properly. You are part of a COIL, and therefore a contributing member;
- Conversely, the agendas of education and research are not definitive guiding frameworks. Be prepared to constantly innovate your own curricula and projects and to not always put personal interests first.

Hanze UAS takes this seriously. There is a strong ambition for significant growth of the number of regional workplaces of the EIL from 3 in the 2016/2017 study year to 15 in 2020. In the long term, approximately 7,5 fte, 600 graduates, 150 interns and 1500 bachelor students will be working in the various locations of the EIL. Now is our opportunity to work together and make this happen. Upscaling in volume and capacity is supported through European and regional innovation programmes.

3.4 EIL: the method

As a modern knowledge institution, Hanze UAS broadened its scope beyond its primary focus on education and research. Hanze is transforming into a learning and innovative community where knowledge is acquired and shared with lecturers and students, but also with partners in the region. The school no longer confines itself to the boundaries of the school building or campus. It contributes to the development of the region. The whole region becomes the playing field. An identical process is occurring in the vocational education and training institutions of Groningen, Alfa-college and Terra. The institutions are developing themselves away from the individual interests of lecturers and the incidental demands of education and toward shared responsibility for the regional economy in a so-called Community of Innovative Learners.

The EIL connects students, lecturers and researchers from different educational institutions and programmes with community interests. Examples include but are not limited to designing an entrepreneurial plan for a beginning entrepreneur, assisting with tax returns, building a public greenery, guiding start-ups, building regional chains on food and energy or researching opportunities and possibilities to promote healthy ageing in the region.

Circular process

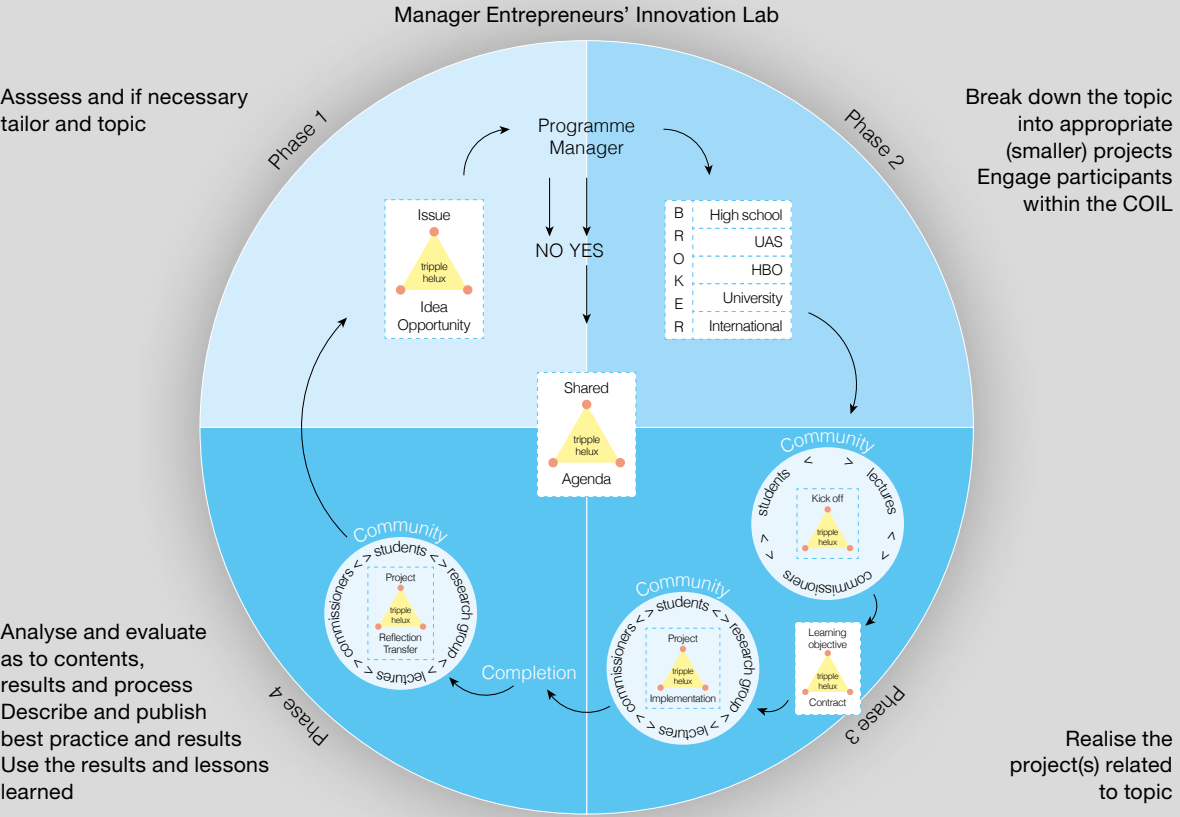
The process of the EIL is circular. That is to say that the work process is a recurring process, in which a flexible system allows for responsibilities and roles to be alternated. At every phase of the project the various roles are defined, all of which relating to the members within the COIL contributing their own identities to benefit the integral process of lifelong learning.



Kick off Student Communication Office Project Groenningen



Entrepreneurs’ Innovation Lab (EIL) process



The school no longer confines itself to the boundaries of the school building or campus. It contributes to the development of the region. The whole region becomes the playing field.

Roles and Responsibilities directly linked to the EIL

The EIL team covers a number of roles (not necessarily all of them being different persons) that correspond to distinct responsibilities in the process, but rely on close collaboration. These are:

Manager EIL

The manager is the linchpin of the EIL. (S)he supervises daily operations, monitors the processes and steps in when necessary.

Responsibilities:

- Connecting on a policy level;
- Formulating policy in the context of the research group and/or the steering committee;
- Adding to a shared agenda and use this as a guide and monitor;
- Monitoring processes;
- Final responsibility for the results of the EIL;
- Contact person for strategic partners;
- Maintaining liaisons with other innovation managers within the Regional Cooperative

The leadership style of the EIL manager varies between participating (in the network), flexibly coaching (supporting and facilitating innovation), directive (setting up frameworks to accommodate self-governed teams to construct methods) and delegating (allowing teams to fulfil their own roles). The leadership of the EIL manager is defined as situational, adapting the style to the ability and willingness of the individual or group they are attempting to lead or influence. It also depends on the task, job or function that needs to be accomplished.

Acquisitions Manager

The acquisitions manager is firmly rooted in the region and is tasked with the acquisition of opportunities, queries and ideas from those involved.

Responsibilities:

- Serving as an contact person for entrepreneurs, citizens, institutions and government;
- Identifying opportunities and converting these into viable projects;
- Contributing suitable issues to the shared agenda;
- Working together with the EIL manager in matching the issue with a potential form of education.

The acquisitions manager has a large network and good social skills. (S)he has affinity with social and economic issues and is able to make connections that lead to innovative concepts and partnerships.

Process Manager

The process manager is responsible for the entire life cycle process of the EIL projects.

Responsibilities:

- Keeping the project log up to date
- Linking education to projects: to outline concrete issues that go with the type of education institution;
- Maintaining liaisons with entrepreneurs and other commissioners;
- Monitoring the progress of projects;
- Intervening when necessary, with the support of network partners (lecturers, entrepreneurs etc.);
- Organizing masterclasses;
- Evaluation and reflection on a project, transferring a possible follow-up.

The process manager has extensive experience in education and has good coaching, instructive and corrective skills. He or she has a large network in the field of education.

Facility manager

The facility manager is the reliable heart and soul of the EIL and ensures that all participants are able to make full use of the EIL’s facilities.

Responsibilities:

- Present when activities are held;
- Catering;
- Cleaning and maintaining the workspace;
- Hosting (physical, via mail and telephone) and redirecting third parties;
- Preparing and cleaning rooms for activities;
- Support duties for activities (IT, gifts, etc.);
- Network management.

The facility manager is flexible and capable of responding promptly and appropriately to situations, thereby ensuring that the EIL’s atmosphere is open and enjoyable to all who utilize the location.

Roles and positions in the outer circle:

Lecturers

The school’s lecturers are the coaches, supervisors and assessors of the students. In the request assessment phase, they see to it that the final project meets the education requirements, learning demands and the initial situation of the student. If necessary, they are present at crucial moments in the implementation of the assignments and/or to support the students. However, they also are part of the learning community. They take part in meetings, workshops and masterclasses, contributing as well as receiving new input.

Responsibilities:

- Providing suitable guidance, including request assessment;
- Providing flanking education at school or in the EIL, for example by teaching relevant master classes;
- Intervening when calamities occur;
- Assessment of the student;
- Accommodating teaching methods and scheduling.

Students

Students select an assignment that fits the curriculum of their training and the learning goals. When they commit to an assignment they become the “owner” of the process and assume responsibility for the implementation of the assignment, as well as maintaining liaisons with those concerned. The student is in training. That means that mistakes can be made. Students stand on their own feet. However, they do not operate in isolation. They can call for support and are properly assisted by the EIL team.

Responsibilities

- Accepting the assignment;
- Formulating the assignment according to the guidelines set out in the programme;
- Determining ‘Go’ and ‘No Go’ occasions;
- Communicating the progress of the assignment clearly to all parties concerned;
- Seeking assistance if required;
- Evaluate with the EIL team members.

Entrepreneurs and other commissioners

The entrepreneurs (not only company owners or representatives, but all commissioners contributing a matter for further investigation and research) share their issue, are prepared to become an active member of the COIL and start a joint research and cooperation process within the COIL. They are aware that all the COIL members are jointly discovering new solutions and opportunities without a ready made answer beforehand. They will help monitoring the learning process, reflecting on progress and learning experiences. As the COIL is facilitating the student’s learning process in particular, they will provide feedback and call for timely interventions if necessary.

Responsibilities:

- Contributing an issue;
- Engaging with the student on the correct assignment description and context;
- Engage as an active member of the COIL
- Working together with the COIL members to determine ‘Go’ and ‘No Go’ occasions;
- Keeping a finger on the pulse of both the process and the results;
- Providing the fellow COIL members with appropriate feedback;
- Making the results available for research group publications (anonymous or otherwise).

Research Group(s)

The SCE research group is tasked with ensuring the knowledge input and dissemination to provide added value to the participants of COILs, various partnerships, the region and international partners. The research group communicates the results in various ways, from a process as well as a content perspective. This targets the context in the broadest sense, ranging from scientific publications to articles in trade journals and newsletters.

Responsibilities:

- Ensuring knowledge input and dissemination;
- Monitoring and analysing processes in cooperatives, EIL and other innovation labs of the Regional Cooperative;
- Publishing scientific articles and articles in periodicals (educational, social, agricultural, etc.);
- Publishing newsletter articles;
- Communicating and sharing knowledge with (international) partners.

3.5 Next Education – Next Business – Next Governance

In the earlier sections we have seen that, supported by authorities and educational institutions, it is up to the SMEs to realise innovations. To achieve this, they need to be able to develop and implement relevant knowledge. This requires new public-private cooperation structures, which will stimulate, enhance and accelerate the innovative strength of the region.

The Regional Cooperative and its EIL as a new regional model of cooperation

The Regional Cooperative functions as a central hub for all participants in the triple (and often even quadruple) helix. Together they initiate programmes or large scale projects aimed at a new regional chain economy. The Regional Cooperative ensures an overall consistency. As the cooperative brings all relevant participants together, it is able to be the driving force of the regional innovation process. It provides an infrastructure for acquiring, managing and sharing knowledge, facilities and budgets. In a series of expert classes the regional partners have defined their common executive agenda and working programme. In the past, systems of cooperation have been quite non-committal, but due to the recently overcome economic crisis there is less money to be shared. To prevent shortages each of the regional partners has to do their bit: give first, take later. This is a learning process for everyone involved:

- Entrepreneurs look beyond their own business and profit. They acquire an understanding of long-term common interest, results and increase in value. By cooperating, they offer and receive new knowledge and access to innovation programmes and funds.
- Education and research play an active role for better employment by acting in a flexible and constructive manner to questions from the region. This can only be done by keeping a close eye on the supply and by adapting curricula to current changes.
- Governments have a new role as active co-thinkers, facilitators and co-handlers. They enable innovations and pave the way to funding. So, not letting things go, but handling issues differently and a different way of handling responsibilities. This new attitude of all actors involved – that is what is meant by ‘next governance’.



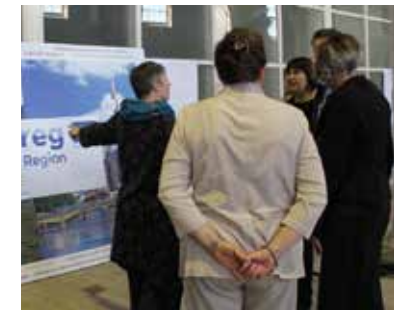


Real life examples

Building a regional food chain

One of the largest programmes is the regional food chain, an interregional cooperation project also linked to international cooperation with partners in Belgium, Sweden, Denmark and Germany. The project partners are developing new business models based on entrepreneurship and innovations in the food industry and preparing cooperative deals between regional suppliers and large consumer organisations, such as hospitals and care institutions. In a parallel process major investments are acquired for realising new food processing infrastructure in the region.

Participants are also educated for new skills and professions such as the food agent, a reliable link who connects and further develops supply and demand. The SCE research group is responsible for the substantive management together with other research groups of Hanze UAS. The programmes are running for two years now. More than 700 students from VET and UAS are currently involved and an ongoing routine for consultations and knowledge creation between entrepreneurs, investors, students and researchers





Living Landscape

One of the Regional Cooperative's first projects is a project called Living Landscape. The goal is to bring back 100 kilometres of windbreaks in the Westerkwartier region back to being well-managed.

But that is not all. In 2016 the Common Agriculture Policy and the agricultural nature and landscape management was overhauled. Through Living Landscape the Regional Cooperative with its stakeholders had the opportunity to develop a practical management policy for the area. A simple and effective policy which will keep and improve the quality of the boscape. In this project students contributed to new models for landscape development and participated in practical landscape maintenance activities.

Energy, water and biobased economy

There is a growing demand to convert renewability into practical tools and methods. This way, collective and business interests are connected to the regional value economy. This is also important for entrepreneurs in the Regional Cooperative. The cooperative and its EIL are located at the business area Mokkenburg in Noordhorn. The entrepreneurs of this business area have started surveying their businesses with the Environmental Barometer. What is the environmental impact of these businesses in their present form and how can environmental improvement be achieved?

Successful application of renewable energy is complex. It must be made sure that energy can be generated, stored and be available at the right moment in its right form as end energy at the right location. Yet another aspect is important: our behaviour and the choices we make for

using that end energy. These issues are the main themes at the EIL Noordhorn and can be put into practice in conjunction with the entrepreneurs at the Mokkenburg business area. From pruning materials to medicine and cosmetics.

Led by the research group of Transition to Bio-Economy, the Regional Cooperative is doing research to use pruning materials as biomass for the production of pharmaceutical and cosmetrical ingredients. Urban vegetation contributes to quality of life for citizens and biological diversity in their surroundings. Pruning materials yield biomass that can be processed into fertilizer and raw material for medication and cosmetics, with a residual valorisation for bioenergy. The circle is completed if planting and maintaining high quality urban vegetation can be financed by valorisation of the pruning materials.

Living environment, health and social well-being

Cooperation between citizens and authorities has fundamentally changed over the last few years. Citizens speak for themselves and are well educated, skilled and competent. They can and want to influence the future of their own residential area's. At the same time, there are concerned about demographic change, school dropouts, unemployment and health problems. If left to their own, some groups of people would be caught between a rock and a hard place.

The Regional Cooperative is working on an overall connecting approach for healthy living in urban and rural area's. It could be summarized as Healthy Region – a practical approach for innovative and sustainable solutions concerning care, health and well-being. Paramount are connections between different policy domains, which all contribute to healthy living in urban and rural areas. The main question is what new roles and responsibilities will



emerge for citizens, civil servants and professionals from these working areas and how this will affect the curricula of the educational institutions involved.

One of the showcases, Innovation Farm Zuidhorn, is executed in conjunction with the Zuidhorn municipality and the Groningen-Assen region. Many citizens, municipalities and social organisations do not know what to do with their vacant real estate. Especially in contracting regions, where schools have to close and farmers can no longer keep their businesses, this is a problem. It is not easy to get private people to rent a monumental school building or a farm. The buildings are there and have to be maintained or torn down, which will lead to extra expenses or even social disturbance.

The process towards the Innovation Farm demonstrates how this problem can be tackled, and in such way that it adds social value and can be profitable for business. The object is a dilapidated 17th century farm in Zuidhorn, which will be renovated and

re-used. The farm will be transformed into a knowledge and innovation lab for the region, a living and learning lab for all parties concerned: education and research, business, social organisations, and authorities. All partners can meet here and develop innovative crossovers together.

From the start, the innovation farm will function as a knowledge and innovation lab. Students from different schools and levels and unemployed people from the region, together with lecturers, coaches and external experts will start the renovation and develop concepts for use and exploitation of the farm.





Youth and start-ups

Rural areas will invariably have to deal with demographic changes of ageing population and young people leaving the area. Both are a threat to regional innovation potential, competitive strength, employment potential, social participation and chances for a solid and differentiated supply of education. Young people will suffer the consequences. For their higher education, they move to larger cities. Many of them would like to return to their region of birth. Due to a shortage of available jobs that meet their – oftentimes – high qualifications, many youngsters move to the metropolitan parts of the country – a brain drain for the peripheral areas in the peripheral regions.

A group of youth workers, bachelor and master students of Hanze UAS Groningen and Groningen University have established the start-up NE(X)

TWORK. They aim to stimulate and support their young colleagues in finding jobs and establishing their own start-ups in the region. This way, they create their own employment. Not expecting immediate and quick economic effects, they wish to contribute to long term improvementsrun. Demographics, employment, care and liveability are just as important to them as accessibility, nature, landscape and environment at local, regional and superregional levels.

Recently, they were invited by to present their business plan at an international conference of the INTERREG 5B programme in Goteborg. In a next phase, they have prepared a cooperative project on this subject and submitted their proposal to the INTERREG monitoring committee.

Community Deal de Wijert

The Community Deal De Wijert is situated in the residential area of the ‘Wijert’. It is a real and binding deal between all stakeholders in the community. They all agree to cooperate towards a strong and resilient future. The times when one single institution was in charge is a thing of the past. In the Community Deal the participants decided jointly determined the themes, resources and time frame for their cooperate actions. In doing so, they composed a multiannual policy programme to realise the agenda of the local community, taking shape in a cocreative process. The interests of the residents play a central role and are matched with the interests, knowledge and expertise of other parties, including the municipality. Creating the community agenda took some time.

During the first meeting, municipal executive councillor Ton Schroor met with residents in the EIL. Following this, a group of neighbourhood residents and professionals in the community picked up the baton and collaborated with other interested parties to create the Community Deal de Wijert.

The pioneering group started a process of meetings in various communities, inviting everyone to pitch their ideas and join the discussions. In addition, meetings on specific topics concerning the community’s future are organised. Examples include: “Sustainable Buildings”, “Work, Income and Cooperation”, “Youth, Development, Facilities and Care”. The EIL itself is observing, participating and contributing to this process, in order to connect local community to students and their teachers. This way, neighbourhood residents can cooperate with students, entrepreneurs, institutions and the municipality of Groningen to shape their ideas.



The outcome of the community deal process till now is a three year policy programme along five themes. There is a project short list for realisation within the next year, and a long term horizon of twenty-two projects contours. When working on their projects, the shareholders may encounter questions like: Do we need to found new company’s or cooperatives to achieve our objectives? Can we keep relying on voluntary work for realising our agenda? How do we safeguard the interests of those not yet actively involved in the deal?

At this stage, we of course don’t have the answers. However, no doubt we will in the future. Finding answers will take shape through learning by doing, supported by action research at the UAS research group of Sustainable Cooperative Entrepreneurship. The process we described here is one of the five experiments on the city council’s route map towards innovating local democracy and governance who all will be observed and evaluated in the course of time.



The local EIL

Regionally empowering entrepreneurship is fastly becoming a part of everyday life. An initiative has therefore been launched in the EIL to bring together the district today's and tomorrow's entrepreneurs. The EIL offers room to grow to the innovative initiatives of established and beginning entrepreneurs.

Meetings can be organized in the EIL to bring together the necessary parties to get entrepreneurial ideas up and running. The municipality, Hanze UAS, Terra VET and Onderneem 't are involved.

Meetings take place every six weeks and ideas are developed further in the meantime.

Additionally, workshops on different subjects are organized for the entrepreneurs. For now these are taught by fellow entrepreneurs, but after the summer break Hanze students will be available to tend to the workshops. On Fridays, the EIL is open to all entrepreneurs so that they can meet, work and ask questions to members of the project team.





Fruitcafe the Helping Hand

During the school year of 2016/2017, hard work resulted in bringing about a unique Community Cooperative. After the building of a former pub stood vacant for a while and the surrounding area became a thorn in the flesh of neighbourhood residents, the Regional Cooperative Westerkwartier began renting the unoccupied building. Eventually, this grew into Fruitcafe the Helping Hand:

Fruitcafe the Helping Hand is a cooperative community shop where regional fruit and vegetables are sold for an affordable price. In the shop, several jobseekers work on participation jobs. They provide additional service to customers by cutting and peeling fresh vegetables and fruit at no extra cost. The community shop also welcomes volunteers who wish to help or find a daily activity.

The Fruitcafe offers a pleasant ambiance to those looking for their neighbours company. Neighbourhood residents and students can meet and catch up over a cup of coffee with a slice of apple pie or a healthy smoothie. Additionally, neighbourhood residents can ask for advice, giving the Noorderpoort or Terra VET students the opportunity to offer a helping hand in the configuration of a new smartphone, or by providing tips for planting the garden. A regulars table is manned by a social worker in training at Noorderpoort, who also forms the connection with the EIL. Larger projects and themes can be matched to the EIL and drawn up there. In turn, the Fruitcafe offers a transparent work placement for students of the Bolster school for secondary special education.

After consultation with the other entrepreneurs, Terra VET students and landscaping firm Donkergroen have also restored the square in front of the Fruitcafe. The canopy drip lines were embellished with planting, parking spots were created for the nearby restaurant's delivery service vehicles and picnic tables were placed so you can enjoy the sunshine.



Elderman Ton Schroor officially opened the Fruitcafe

The members of the cooperative are: Regional Cooperative Westerkwartier and Terra VET Groningen. After the summer holiday, Noorderpoort will join the cooperative. Rien Willems of the Albert Heijn supermarket at the Van Lennepaan offers practical support by, among other things, providing additional products, flow of trainees and possibly participation staff.

The Fruitcafe logo is designed by students of Noorderpoort.





Coenderspark and Van Lennepaan

Following a community initiative, the municipality of Groningen has decided to work together with neighbourhood residents to decorate the local Coenderspark in order to give it a more open and accessible character. Neighbourhood residents have taken great care in helping with the design of the layout and have contributed time and effort to its construction.

Civil servants from the municipality of Groningen have involved Terra

students in the process from start to finish. For example, students have taken part in the work preparation and they have also been included in the implementation of various operations.

Students of the Wage Work programme were supervised by Garden, Park and Landscape students in the excavation of the outlines of the footpaths by crane, allowing neighbourhood residents to mix and flatten the material for the



paths during the weekend. The neighbourhood residents shared the results of their efforts on the Facebook page of the Coenderspark.

A similar process is ongoing in the refurbishment of the Van Lennepaan. The initial meetings where neighbourhood residents, students and entrepreneurs convened with a landscape architect and traffic planner led to a proposal. The meetings took place in the EIL.



After this process, the residents involved in the design group organised an open market for other neighbourhood residents and customers of the shopping mall. The community welcomed the plan and it has since been adopted by the city council. Preparations are currently under way, with Terra VET students working on various parts of the project.



Implementation City Maintenance Programme

Every Monday, a Terra lecturer brings a group of students enrolled in a Terra Start programme associated with the green domain to the EIL. They go over theory and visit the community to carry out landscaping assignments. In addition to this group there are multiple other groups of Terranext who take part in the implementation of the city management's maintenance programme.



All Children Active

Entrepreneur Stefan Alfons, owner of fitness centre Totally in Shape, saw that there are many children in the Wijert district without access to physical training. He therefore introduced to the EIL the idea of 'All Children Active'. Terra VET students have designed a corporate identity for his project and have adapted the grounds behind the fitness centre to children's needs. The entrance of the fitness centre is redecorated and a Hanze UAS student carried out

research in the community to write a business plan for Stefan. Next school year, the follow-up questions and assignments that emerged from these results will be matched with the new crop of students.



Student-led community workshops

Students from Terra's animal care and flower programmes have developed a programme with a broad range of workshops this year. There are monthly workshops on interesting subjects that are free of charge to neighbourhood residents. The purpose of these workshops is to bring neighbourhood residents into contact with students and each other in an informal atmosphere. Students get an even firmer grasp on their craft, because they can share their knowledge and skills, whereas neighbourhood residents enjoy educational, social activities in their community. Research by the students of Hanze UAS programme in Social Studies found that among

many neighbourhood residents, there is a need for such activities in their vicinity.

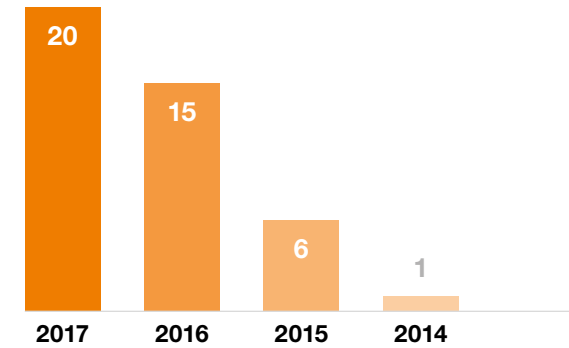
Every school year, the new crop of students will pick up the baton and safeguard the continuity of the workshops. Where possible, the connection with neighbourhood entrepreneurs will be made. Examples of workshops: A lecture on cat behavior in collaboration with the cat clinic Groningen at the van Lenneplaan, a Christmas decoration workshop, a children's seminar with (young) animals in the EIL, a spring flower arrangement workshop and a neighbourhood dog walk with (puzzle) challenges for dog and owner.



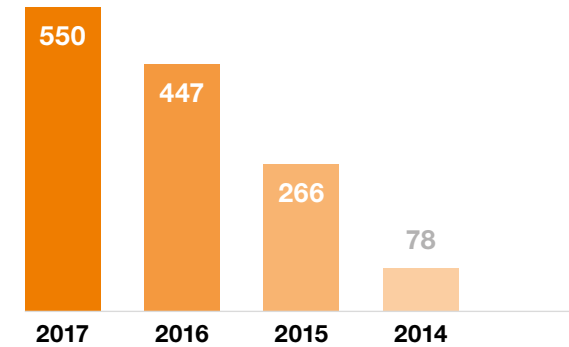
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Facts & Figures

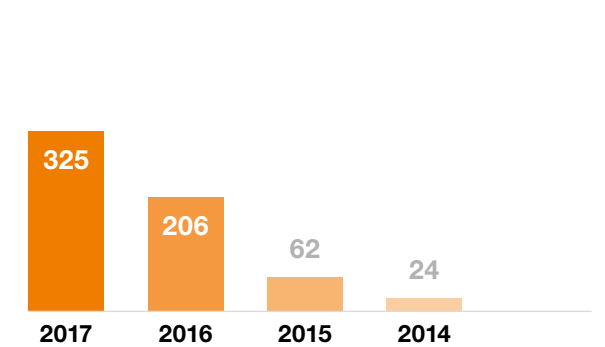
Newly created jobs



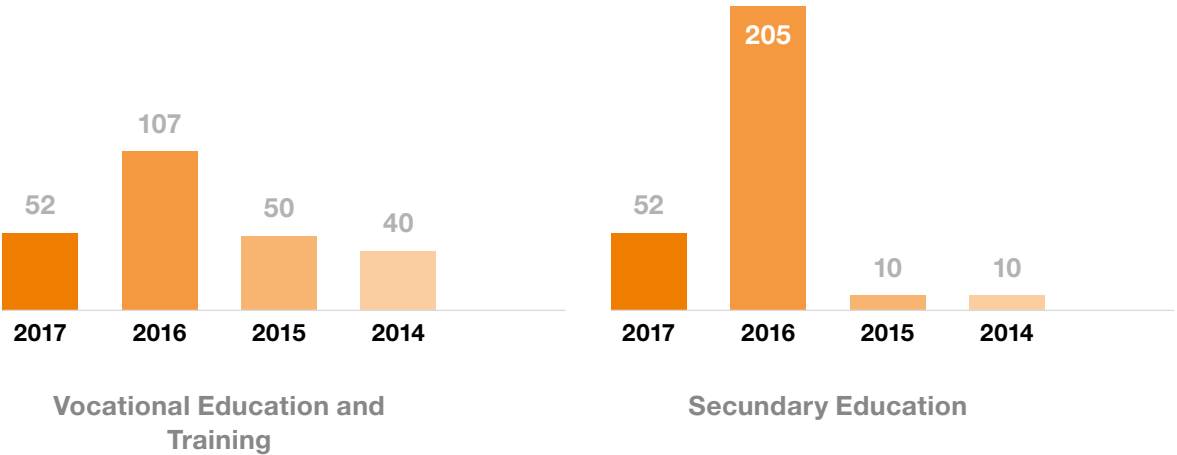
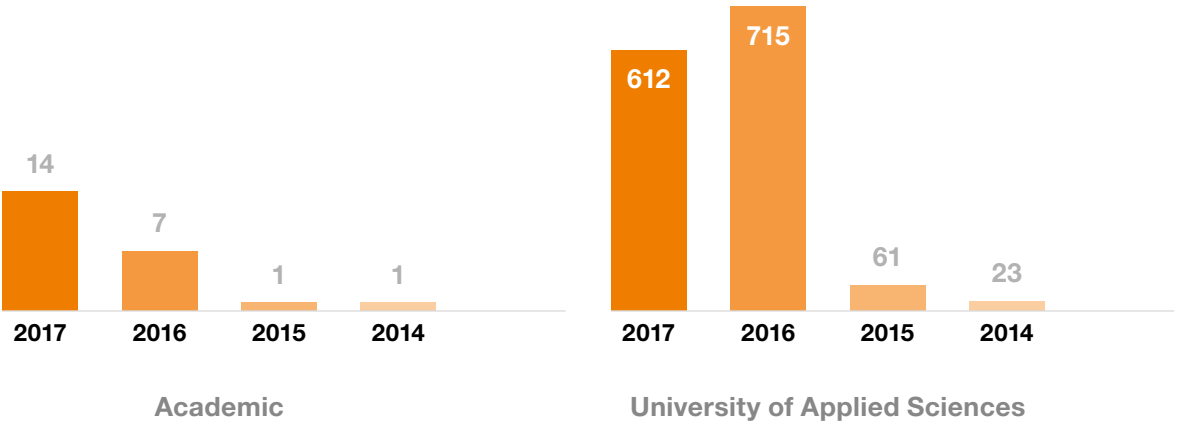
Participants seminars



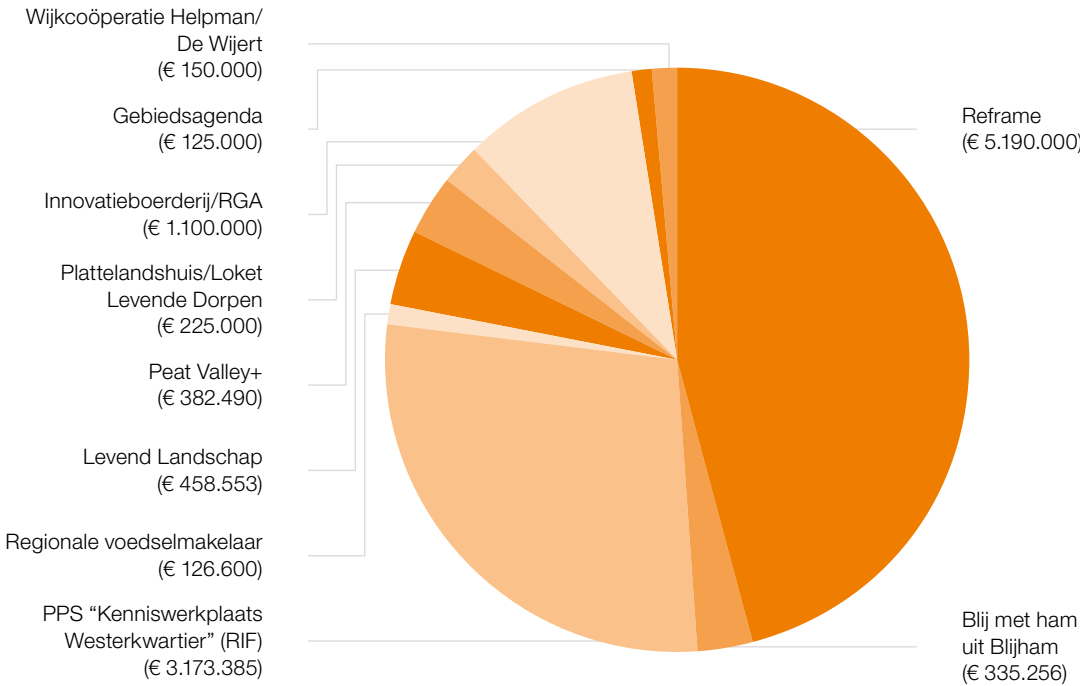
Completed research and reports



(Research) students



Financial figures (project volumes of major and multiannual projects)



Yearly figures	2016	2015	2014
Yield	€ 1.074.869	€ 556.330	€ 61.098
Cost	€ 1.037.880	€ 553.000	€ 72.364
Result	€ 36.989	€ 3.330	€ -11.266

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This publication addresses the practical research of the Sustainable Cooperative Entrepreneurship(SCE) research group at Hanze University of Applied Sciences (UAS) Groningen. The SCE research group is linked to the Sustainable Financial Management research group led by Professor Dr. Margreet Boersma. It is a component of the Marian van Os centre for Entrepreneurship established by Hanze UAS Groningen and associated with the institute for Financial Economic Management (FEM).

Through the SCE research group, Professor Willem Foorthuis and his research team advocate the diversity, quality and innovation capability of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and seek to solidify the northern SMEs' perspective locally, regionally and with an international dimension. Central to this quest is the invaluable role of education, provided that knowledge institutions acquire a more flexible position and focus more on the regional agenda. Also essential is governmental innovation through actively and cooperatively engaged administrators.

The SCE research group links market, education and public administration in their commitment to improve local and regional resilience and innovation capacity. The SCE research group designates this as *Next Education, Next Governance and Next Business*, which is applied and tested by practitioners at Regional Cooperative Westerkwartier and the Cooperative Community Helpman/de Wijert in Groningen city, where the aforementioned models become reality. They both set out, on regional and local level, how entrepreneurs, public administration, neighbourhood residents and education partners can steadily connect in order to work together on practical solutions for current issues.

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